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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ANKARA 007114

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/06/2013

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#) [AF](#) [CY](#) [ASEC](#) [OVIP](#)

SUBJECT: TGS D/CHOD BASBUG'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON - AN
OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP RELATIONS

REF: A. ANKARA 7006

[1](#)B. ANKARA 6992

[1](#)C. ANKARA 6734

(u) Classified by Ambassador Eric S. Edelman. Reasons: 1.5
(B and D).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) Turkish General Staff Deputy Chief Basbug will visit Washington November 16-21 to lead the Turkish delegation to the US-Turkey High-Level Defense Group (HLDG). He has requested meetings with National Security Advisor Rice, DepSecDef Wolfowitz, CJCS Myers and VCJCS Pace. Basbug may also seek meetings at State with the Deputy Secretary and/or the Undersecretary for Political Affairs. This is Basbug's first visit to the US as D/CHOD. Post strongly supports these meeting requests as a key opportunity to re-build a relationship with the Turkish military. Basbug's visit is also an excellent opportunity to discuss with a credible and important Turkish official issues besides Iraq, including Afghanistan, Cyprus, Armenia, and Turkey's aspirations for EU accession, and to help the new TGS leadership establish relations with civilian USG counterparts as well as top US military officials. Basbug is a thoughtful, direct man with excellent control of factual information. He has always been top of his class and is likely to be the TGS Chief someday. He has excellent credentials with both the Turkish Army in the field and with defense policy makers in Ankara. In short, his visit to Washington is an opportunity we should not miss. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) The Turkish General Staff, with the pressure of EU democracy reforms under CHOD General Ozkok's leadership, has seen its role in Turkish politics and policy-making reduced. Nonetheless, there are a number of influential officers who are uncomfortable with these developments, who are very suspicious of EU and US intentions and who want to slow or prevent change in the Turkish system. The military is broadly opposed to the AK Party, currently in power, because it comes out of a religious-oriented background and its ultimate direction is suspect. Basbug was moved into his current position last August as General Ozkok brought allies into a number of senior positions. His reputation as a strategic thinker makes him a key player in the effort to make Turkey a more modern country. However, the TGS continues to seek political alternatives to AK that will garner public support and be more clearly committed to Turkey's political traditions.

Iraq

[1](#)3. (SBU) Iraq and resolution of the PKK/KADEK question remain a current focus of the US-Turkish security relationship. Having settled for now the question of potential Turkish troop deployment for a stabilization force in Iraq (and all Washington interlocutors could usefully thank Basbug and TGS for supporting the idea and helping get Parliamentary approval) Turks are seized with two other Iraq-related issues: Whether the U.S. will move against PKK/KADEK terrorists in northern Iraq; and Turkey's perception of US preferential treatment of Iraqi Kurds. Senior GOT officials including PM Erdogan, as well as our contacts with ordinary citizens, have indicated that concrete action by the U.S. to eliminate the PKK/KADEK threat will ease Turkish suspicions that the U.S. favors the Kurds in northern Iraq over our relations with Turkey in ways that will eventually harm Turkey's interests. It will also be the key to securing the eventual withdrawal of some 1,500 Turkish Special Forces currently in northern Iraq and to disbanding the Turkish-led Peace Monitoring Force.

[1](#)4. (SBU) The Turkish Parliament recently passed a

"re-integration" law allowing non-leadership members of the PKK/KADEK to return voluntarily to Turkey. Owing to the restrictive nature of the language and efforts by PKK/KADEK leaders to prevent those in the camps from gaining access to accurate information about the law, results have been disappointing so far. The Turks are looking to the USG to implement our commitment to eliminate the PKK/KADEK threat from Iraq. State's Counter Terrorism Chief Amb. Black was in Ankara October 2 to discuss PKK/KADEK and agreed with the Turks on a plan of action using the full range of statecraft tools to eliminate the PKK/KADEK threat. The Turks also remain disturbed by what they consider to be Kurdish (vice U.S. or Iraqi central authority) control of the Iraqi side of the Turkish-Iraq border. The U.S and GOT are attempting to put behind us hard feelings from a July 4 incident, in which U.S. forces arrested Turkish troops believed to be working to foment instability. That event and the Turks' perception that we mishandled it (although Chief of the General Staff Ozkok subsequently transferred the two Turkish generals responsible for Turkish special forces in Iraq short of tour) are likely to linger in the background of the relationship. Basbug will raise the PKK/KADEK threat with his interlocutors.

15. (U) There has been a concerted effort on the part of the GOT to shift its Iraq policy away from one centered on ethnicity (Turkmen and Kurd) and northern Iraq towards a more central, Baghdad-oriented policy based primarily on contributing to stability through trade, humanitarian assistance and commercial opportunities for Turkish businesses. However, GOT efforts have not found much traction with the military, the press or the public, which remain focused on northern Iraq, and suffered when the Turks withdrew their offer of troops. The Turks have taken a number of concrete steps in humanitarian assistance and reconstruction since Secretary Powell's April visit to Turkey. The World Food Program (WFP) continues to ship considerable quantities of food through Turkey, and Turkey is also the world's biggest supplier (in value terms) to WFP. The GOT also has supported the U.S. military's efforts to establish a ground line of communications (GLOC) here to re-supply U.S. forces in Iraq. Turkey recently facilitated a Turkish company's export of electricity to Iraq, continues to support fuel barter deals to supply essential energy supplies to the Iraqi people, and has offered some commercial/aid deals that Washington and CPA are considering. Ankara 7006 describes Turkey's experience with training that could be relevant and beneficial in the Iraq context.

Afghanistan

16. (C) Turkish support for the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan has been a bright spot in US-Turkish relations since September 11, 2001, and likely could be a possible area for future cooperation as we look to broaden our cooperation outside of Iraq. Up until now, the Turkish military has been almost exclusively focused on preparations for a possible deployment to Iraq, and therefore has declined requests from NATO, CENTCOM and others to contribute additional military forces to ISAF or the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). That said, we do not rule out the possibility that the GOT would be prepared to contribute forces at a later date and therefore recommend that Washington share our current assessment of the situation in Afghanistan. Specifically, we recommend that Washington provide Basbug a detailed briefing on our accomplishments, what we are doing now, and where we are heading in the future -- while stopping short of soliciting formal contributions from Turkey for either ISAF or the PRTs.

CYPRUS

17. (SBU) P.M. Erdogan appears committed to finding a comprehensive solution on Cyprus, but faces continued resistance from the TGS and other elements of Turkish society. Erdogan has reaffirmed his intention to use the Annan III Plan as the basis for finding a solution, both for domestic political reasons and his interest in promoting Turkey's EU candidacy. However, the Turkish establishment's long support for Denktash, his rejection of the Annan plan, and Denktash supporters in Ankara leave the GOT without an approach to achieve a comprehensive solution. Much will depend on the government's willingness to take on this issue between now and spring 2004, when Cyprus' EU membership becomes effective. AK owes nothing politically to "TRNC" leader Denktash and is thus interested in promoting transparent and fair parliamentary elections in the North in

December. No matter what the outcome, the elections, which have become a de facto referendum on a comprehensive solution, will profoundly affect the likelihood of a settlement before May. Basbug's boss, General Ozkok, recently went public with a not completely coherent explanation of why Turkey has a strategic interest in Cyprus that is not met by EU membership or the UN plan. NSC and State interlocutors should share the contrary US view.

CAUCASUS

18. (C) GOT remains open in principle to improving relations with Armenia, and has inaugurated additional Istanbul-Yerevan commercial charter flights (twice weekly) but refuses to open its border with Armenia before Yerevan recognizes the border. However, continued GOT linkage of normalization of relations with Armenia to improvements in Nagorno-Karabakh has thwarted an official breakthrough. MFA Caucasus Deputy DirGen Tezgor continues to express MFA's concern to us that the U.S. has no strategic plan for dealing with Russian and Iranian pressure. Tezgor has hinted that Turkey would be forced to make its own peace with Russian and Iranian interests absent any coherent U.S. political strategy beyond completion of BTC and standard expressions of support for democracy and resolution of N-K. Erdogan's government is much less wedded than its predecessors to Azerbaijan's ruling Aliyev family. GOT and AK party officials tell us they recognize the potential trade and development benefits to Turkey from opening the border. The Caucasus Working Group will address specific mil-mil cooperation in the Caucasus countries, but senior Washington officials could usefully reaffirm the USG's desire to work with Turkey in the region and to balance growing Russian and Iranian influence. We could also commend the Turks for their cooperation with us in Georgia's security assistance programs. It will be important for Basbug to come away with a clear view that the US has a policy and is relevant in this region.

EU ACCESSION

19. (C) The Turkish Parliament has adopted seven EU-related human rights reform packages over the past two years. The legal amendments are designed to improve Turkish democracy, increase individual freedoms, improve the rule of law, crack down on torture, loosen restrictions on speech and assembly, reduce the political influence of the National Security Council, and expand religious freedom. The EU and other outside observers have praised the reforms, while criticizing the slow pace of implementation. Questions remain whether the AK government will be able to implement these reforms rapidly, particularly given the resistance from an openly partisan President Sezer and those in the judiciary, military and other areas of the state apparatus who are content with the status quo. Nationalistic and status quo elements of the military, police, judiciary, and bureaucracy have criticized some of the reforms as threats to national security, and have resisted implementation. In some cases, bureaucratic offices have drafted highly restrictive implementing legislation. For example, Parliament lifted restrictions on Kurdish language broadcasting, but the subsequent Radio and Television Board regulation set strict time limits and restricted such broadcasts to state-owned media outlets. Despite GOT progress on human rights, EU officials have repeatedly told the GOT that it will be difficult for the EU at the December 2004 Summit to offer Turkey a date to begin accession talks without better implementation or if there is no settlement on Cyprus. We should leave Basbug without any doubt about our commitment to Turkey's EU accession and to a Cyprus settlement based on the Annan Plan.

MIDDLE EAST ROADMAP

10. (SBU) Turkey supports the Middle East Roadmap and has exchanged a number of ministerial visits with Israel recently; Erdogan and FonMin Gul have deferred visits owing to disagreement over inclusion of a call on Arafat, who remains the symbol of Palestine among Turks. Turkey prides itself on its good relations with both Israelis and Palestinians. While Turkey has close military, intel, and commercial ties with Israel, the GOT is leery of getting too far ahead of a Turkish populace that sympathizes with the plight of the Palestinians.

SYRIA AND IRAN

11. (C) Turkey cautiously supports USG policy objectives in Syria and Iran but worries that we will press for pre-emptive action against both countries. Both the GOT and core elements of the State argue that Turkey: 1) lives in a rough neighborhood and has an interest in minimizing friction with its neighbors; and 2) shares the same values and goals in the Middle East as the U.S. (stability, democracy and prosperity). In the latter regard, FonMin Gul delivered a call for democracy and reform in the Islamic world at the June OIC Summit in Tehran and has asserted to us that Turkey is constantly delivering a message to the Syrians to cooperate more with the U.S. Gul, heavily influenced by foreign policy advisor Ahmet Davutoglu (who has a deeply Islamist background), sees Syria as engaged in gradual democratization, and the GOT thinks this process needs encouragement. Turkey and Syria appear to be increasing CBMs, with the GOT announcing in early November that it will demine its border strip with Syria to increase trade and human contact. The GOT has no enthusiasm for a policy of overt pressure against Syria, although Turks remind us of the value of engaging the Syrians constantly on issues of concern. Washington officials might want to review our concerns about Syrian behavior with Basbug.

12. (C) Turkey's relations with Iran bear the weight of centuries of mutual suspicion, indeed antipathy, but the current GOT appears intent on maintaining open dialogue with Tehran. The GOT has declared it shares U.S. concerns about reported Iranian WMD programs and has expressed support for the U.S. initiative to bring Iran into conformity with IAEA safeguards. However, officials also assert that too much pressure (e.g. referring a finding of NPT non-compliance to the UNSC) would undermine moderates in Tehran and strengthen the position of Iranian hardliners, who believe that the West will not be appeased and therefore should not be accommodated. Turkish officials argue that Turkey has an interest in minimizing friction with its neighbor. Intent on maintaining at least cordial relations and loathe to upset economic ties, despite Tehran's past record of support and safe harbor to PKK terrorists, officials have continually cautioned U.S. interlocutors that Iran is not easily changed from outside; that the Azeris are well entrenched in Iranian society, with considerable economic and political influence; and that attempts to wreak regime change from abroad are doomed to failure. Basbug should hear about our concerns regarding Iran's WMD ambitions and support for terrorism.

EDELMAN